

Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests

Informal preparatory meeting (virtual)
23 April 2020, 15:00-18:00 CET

Minutes

Participants (19)

Mr.	Peter	Blombäck
Dr.	James	Brandt
Mr.	Zbignev	Glazko
Prof.	Peter	Högberg
Dr.	Gerben	Janse
Mr.	Nuutti	Kiljunen
Dr.	Taneli	Kolström
Dr.	Florian	Kraxner
Ms.	Leonie	Meier
Mr.	Knut	Oistad
Dr.	Guy	Robertson
Mr.	Kenichi	Shono
Dr.	Darren	Sleep
Ms.	Maria	Sokolenko
Mr.	Johann	Svensson
Dr.	Tatu	Torniainen
Ms.	Maureen	Whelan
Dr.	Christopher	Woodall
Dr.	Povilas	Žemaitis

Introduction:

Peter Blombäck welcomes participants and expresses his gratitude to participants for their willingness to engage in this informal premeeting via Skype now that physical meeting are not possible due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

His hope is to have a first informal exchange of views in order to prepare for, hopefully, a physical meeting in the margins of COFFI this autumn. He reiterates that this meeting is informal, meaning that no decisions (such as e.g. election of team leader) will be taken.

Agenda items:

1. Adoption of the agenda

Peter Blombäck shortly introduces the agenda.
The agenda is adopted without amendments.

2. Introductions

Peter Blombäck invites participants to introduce themselves.

3. Background on how this group was developed

Guy Robertson presents facts about the boreal zone, differences between the boreal countries as well as challenges and opportunities for the boreal.

Florian Kraxner presents the background of circumboreal cooperation, IBFRA's involvement and the progress so far with circumboreal cooperation – including the outcome of the 2018 Boreal Ministerial Summit and the start of the Insight Process.

Peter Höglberg presents the work of the Insight Process so far, including results so far. The focus has so far been on the role of forests in mitigating climate change. IBFRA is however planning to address other aspects of sustainable forest management.

Peter Blombäck opens the floor for questions to presenters.

Guy Robertson asks the other presenters if there – apart from fire – is any prognosis concerning other threats/disturbances.

Participants discussed the interlinkages between insect damages and forest fires.

James Brandt mentions that moths are a major problem in Canada. There is strong interplay between drought, fire and insects in the Canadian context.

4. Terms of Reference

Leonie Meier recapitulates the establishment of the ToS and gives a run through of the terms of reference and mandate as adopted by UNECE COFFI / FAO EFC. She points out the possibilities for cooperation with other ToS and explains the roles and responsibilities of the team leader, team members and the Secretariat.

5. Identification of thematic areas of work

a) Country replies to guiding questions

Peter Blombäck asks each participating country to answer the following three questions (sent out beforehand):

1. *Key challenges facing boreal forests;*
2. *What is needed (in terms of data, policy recommendations, tools) that could help address some of those challenges?*
3. *What are some of the activities you would like the ToS to focus on?*

• Austria (Florian Kraxner, on behalf of IBFRA)

- Key challenge is the lack of awareness of the importance of boreal forests. He refers to the list of scientific challenges as identified during the Boreal Ministerial Summit in 2018 in Haparanda. As regards data, policy and tools he mentions that a lot of information is already available but it isn't necessarily in an easily digestible format. Better communication is needed. He would like to see the ToS as a hub to connect with e.g. IBFRA scientists, but also IUFRO, thereby multiplying the effectiveness of what we would like to do.

- **Canada**
 - Challenges (James Brandt): climate change because it affects Canadian forests in many ways (e.g. drought, natural disturbances, carbon cycle, water cycle). Another challenge is the health of the forest sector. The number of mills has decreased and the number of jobs likewise. Another challenge is the ecological and social-economic situation. Species at risk – i.e. the caribou is particularly at risk.
 - Data, policy, tools (Darren Sleep): there is a clear need for readily available, easily understandable knowledge. A need for an active communication/distribution program (to the general public) in order to counter misinformation. Essential items therein: the role of the boreal forest in mitigating climate change.
 - Activities to focus on (Maureen Whelan): policy briefs using the latest science addressing policy issues. Exchange of best practices – different approaches to similar problems. Helping IBFRA and starting to think about future Insight Processes – what are the policy problems we can contribute to – the science-policy interface. We should start using our collective engagement to bring forward issues on the global policy arena (e.g. UNFF, COFO).
- **Finland (Tatu Torniainen):**
 - Challenges: how are boreal forests seen in the big picture – climate goals, mitigation, Agenda 2030. The boreal profile isn't as big as it should be. The balance between forest management and biodiversity needs. Acceptance of forest management and the forest sector at large – renewal of our practices to increase market access.
 - Data, policy, tools: Insight Process is a good example. Need to continue. Exchange views on how each country promotes the bioeconomy.
 - Activities to focus on: platform for policy makers, researchers and stakeholders to interact and cooperate.
- **Lithuania (Povilas Zemaitis, Zbignev Glazko)**
 - Challenges: climate change – health and vulnerability, how to adapt forests to climate change, tree species selection, and the impact of invasive species. Another issue is the rise of demand for forest raw material versus public opinion. Carbon sequestration in soil and wood products. The need to improve SFM practices and thus improve public acceptance.
 - Data, policy, tools: there is a lot of data and knowledge available, e.g. EUFORGEN. How can we increase its use and learn from best practices.
 - Activities to focus on: the exchange of experience on SFM, wider communication between science and decision-makers, informing society about the benefits of forests and the bioeconomy and combating climate change.
- **Norway (Knut Oistad)**
 - Challenges: climate change adaptation – threats. To improve the contribution of the boreal forests to other societal challenges – the circular bioeconomy. To communicate the previous points.
 - Data, policy, tools: we need to improve strategies for adaptation, increase interdisciplinary research, improve the science-policy dialogue on these matters.
 - Activities to focus on: to synthesize data, compare data from other boreal countries, to learn from each other and to create policy briefs that can aid policy and society at large.

The forestry side needs to better understand society's needs & worries in order to improve our communication with them.

- **Russian Federation (Maria Sokolenko)**

- Challenges: climate change bring both benefits and risks. Extreme weather conditions, forest fires, pests & diseases are a major challenge. Lack of proper evaluation of forest ecosystem services (e.g. related to climate change). Conflict of interests, trade-offs.
- Data, policy, tools: strategies for better adaptation and mitigation. Exchange experiences on forecasting the impacts of climate change. Silvicultural measures and strategies.
- Activities to focus on: strengthen exchange of experiences – legislation, forest fire monitoring, forest health control, forest fire fighting. Building research cooperation in order to back up policy making. Outreach and communication campaigns.

- **Sweden (Gerben Janse, Johan Svensson)**

- Challenges: climate change related disturbances. Biodiversity – landscape fragmentation. How to move from discussions on the quantity of conservation to the quality of conservation. Restoration in order to regain landscapes. Better multiple use of forests.
- Data, policy, tools: Stronger scientific cooperation between boreal forest scientists in order to increase our understanding of the bigger picture – how to adapt boreal forests to climate change, how to further increase their mitigation potential.
- Activities to focus on: Continue with the work on compiling scientific information for policy-makers on boreal forests & climate change. After conclusion of the first Insight Process with its focus on mitigation we could envision a second such process focusing on adaptation. Continue with the work on the science-policy interface (e.g. related to the point above). Exchange of experience on “smart ways of conserving biodiversity”/“quality conservation”), eg on green infrastructure and other landscape-based approaches to conservation.

- **USA (Chris Woodall)**

- Challenges: global change effects (disease, fires) and their interactions. Monitoring and application – data trend line is short in US due to remote location of Alaskan forests. Effect on indigenous communities. Increasing resilience of forests dependent cultures in the boreal.
- Data, policy, tools: compiling science throughout the boreal in order to be able to communicate the challenge we face to society – singling out the importance of the boreal (e.g. vis-à-vis the tropics).
- Activities to focus on: Compiling and communicating existing work. Cooperation on the above.

b) Brainstorming

Peter Blombäck proposes to have the brainstorming done during a physical meeting, i.e. at the first ToS meeting.

6. Date and place of next meeting

Peter Blombäck asks participants whether there is a need for another informal meeting via Skype before the planned ToS meeting in November in the margins of COFFI.

Maria Sokolenko would prefer another informal Skype meeting after the JWP consultations. As regards a physical meeting she would prefer to have it during the COFFI week, and not necessarily at the Palace if there is a problem with finding rooms.

Guy Robertson agrees with Maria Sokolenko that June probably is too early. September would perhaps be better. We could continue with brainstorming and compile the background data needed for the first ToS meeting. As regards the physical meeting it would be easiest to do it in conjunction with COFFI.

Peter Blombäck summarizes that there is consensus on another preparatory informal skype meeting during September or October and that the physical first ToS meeting should take place during the COFFI week.